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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 542 - APRIL 13, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. LEBANON. THE FOUR CONSECUTIVE DAYS OF FIGHTING IN BEIRUT HAS RESULTED IN AT LEAST 200 CASUALTIES SO FAR. SYRIAN FORCES HAVE USED TANKS, ARTILLERY, AND ROCKETS AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN SUBURBS SOUTH OF THE CITY. EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTS THAT SECURITY IN WEST BEIRUT HAS DETERIORATED TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL SINCE THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR. SCHOOLS WERE CLOSED THROUGHOUT BEIRUT YESTERDAY, AND THERE HAVE BEEN THREE KIDNAPPINGS IN THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AREA.

2. RUMORS ABOUND THAT VARIOUS PARTIES -- CHRISTIANS, SYRIANS, PALESTINIANS, LEFTISTS -- PLAN TO ESCALATE THE FIGHTING WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. THE CURRENT ROUND OF CLASHES ONCE AGAIN HAS MADE THE PALESTINIAN ROLE IN LEBANON A PRIMARY ISSUE OF CONTENTION. THE MOVEMENT OF LARGE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON TO BEIRUT FOLLOWING THE ISRAELI INVASION RENEWED STRAINS

BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AND LEBANESE. THE PALESTINIANS, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY ARE NOT PREPARED TO CLASH WITH THE LEBANESE RIGHTISTS AT THIS TIME. AS A PALESTINIAN NEWSPAPER DECLARED, THE PALESTINIANS ARE CURRENTLY "FULLY COMMITTED TO WAGING A WAR AGAINST ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF SOUTH
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LEBANON."

3. THE CHRISTIANS AND THEIR RIGHTIST ALLIES, FOR THEIR PART, ARE RIDING A WAVE OF ANTI-PALESTINIANISM. THEY HOLD THE PALESTINIANS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF SOUTHERN LEBANON AND REGARD THE MOVEMENT OF WEAPONS TO THE NORTH AS A DIRECT THREAT TO THE CHRISTIAN HEARTLAND. CHRISTIAN RADIO BROADCASTS CONTINUE TO ALLEGE THAT PALESTINIAN ATTACKS ON THE RIGHTISTS ARE THE CAUSE OF THE CURRENT FIGHTING. (THE KIDNAPPING OF A MUSLIM PHALANGIST BY PALESTINIANS IS ONE OF THE INCIDENTS WHICH SPARKED THE CLASHES.)

4. THE CHRISTIAN FEARS OF PALESTINIAN-INSPIRED VIOLENCE IN BEIRUT WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DISPATCH ADDITIONAL FORCES TO THE SOUTH SINCE THE SOLDIERS MAY BE NEEDED TO DEFEND THE GOVERNMENT AND CHRISTIAN LEBANON.

5. AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THESE CLASHES, PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKER ASSAD (A SHIITE FROM THE SOUTH) HAS ANNOUNCED THAT PARLIAMENT WILL HOLD A SPECIAL DEBATE ON APRIL 20 ON THE

PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. MANY MUSLIM POLITICIANS OPPOSE THIS MOVE, BUT THE CALL HAS ALMOST UNIVERSAL SUPPORT FROM THE RIGHT. THE PHALANGE NEWSPAPER RECENTLY EDITORIALIZED THAT THE REUNIFICATION OF LEBANON "IS NOT POSSIBLE WITH THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF THE PALESTINIANS HERE." MEANWHILE, RIGHTIST LEADERS SHAMOUN AND GEMAYEL HAVE DECLARED THAT THE 1969 CAIRO AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PALESTINIANS -- WHICH GIVES THE PALESTINIANS SPECIAL RIGHTS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON -- NO LONGER EXISTS.

6. SEVERE STRAINS ALSO HAVE DEVELOPED BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND SYRIANS. SOME CHRISTIAN LEADERS BELIEVE THAT THE SYRIANS ARE ATTEMPTING TO EXACT RETRIBUTION FOR THE
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FAYYADIYAH INCIDENT LAST FEBRUARY IN WHICH LEBANESE FORCES AND CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN KILLED MORE THAN 150 SYRIAN SOLDIERS.

7. IN ANY CASE, CHRISTIAN MILITIA LEADERS ARE CONCERNED THAT SYRIA WILL BE MERCILESS IN PUNISHING THEIR FOLLOWERS IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUES. THEREFORE, THEY HAVE ORDERED THEIR MILITIAMEN NOT TO FIRE ON THE SYRIANS. THEIR CONTROL IS NOT COMPLETE, HOWEVER, AND MILITIAMEN WILL FIGHT IF THEIR OWN NEIGHBORHOODS ARE ATTACKED. FURTHERMORE, IF THE SYRIANS CONTINUE TO STEP UP THE FIGHTING, CHRISTIANS ELSEWHERE WILL COME TO THE AID OF THEIR CO-RELIGIONISTS IN BEIRUT'S SOUTHERN SUBURBS. ANOTHER WORRISOME POSSIBILITY IS THAT CLUMSY SYRIAN TACTICS AND OVERZEALOUS UNIT COMMANDERS MIGHT PROLONG THE FIGHTING EVEN IF DAMASCUS ORDERS A HALT. THIS OCCURRED IN FEBRUARY AND COULD EASILY HAPPEN AGAIN. (SECRET)

8. ISRAEL. IN AN APPEARANCE BEFORE THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE, BEGIN GAVE A FAVORABLE PICTURE OF UNIFIL AND THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S RELATIONS WITH UN OFFICIALS. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV, HE DEFENDED THE ISRAELI INCURSION AND ITS RESULTS, AND STRESSED THAT ISRAEL WILL DEFINITELY MAINTAIN THE "GOOD FENCE" WITH THE SOUTHERN LEBANESE. REGARDING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, HE CLAIMED THAT THE UN UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS WAS DEPENDENT ON UNIFIL'S ABILITY TO DEPLOY. THE IDF WITHDREW ESSENTIALLY AS PLANNED FROM PART OF THE ARQOUB ON APRIL 11 AND THE NEXT STAGE IS SCHEDULED TOMORROW IN THE TAYYIBAH AREA.

9. THE EMERGENCE IN RECENT WEEKS OF A MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL THAT FAVORS MORE FLEXIBLE PEACE PROPOSALS, AND THE BEGIN
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GOVERNMENT'S SPONSORSHIP OF A COUNTER ORGANIZATION, HAVE HAD THE EFFECT OF UNDERMINING THE SOLIDARITY THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS SOUGHT TO FOSTER AND MAY GIVE RISE TO A MORE SUBSTANTIVE NATIONAL DEBATE ON THE PEACE PROCESS. UNTIL NOW, PUBLIC DISCUSSION HAS TENDED TO FOCUS PRIMARILY ON BEGIN'S TACTICAL BLUNDERS AND ON THE STRAINS IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS, RATHER THAN ON THE ISSUES THEMSELVES.

10. THE LEADERS OF THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT, WHICH KICKED OFF ITS CAMPAIGN WITH A LARGE OUTDOOR RALLY IN TEL AVIV ON APRIL 1, HOPE TO BRING PRESSURE ON BEGIN TO REASSESS HIS PEACE PROPOSALS. TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM, THEY HAVE INITIATED SIGNATURE AND LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGNS. ANOTHER MASS RALLY IS BEING PLANNED FOR APRIL 30 IN JERUSALEM UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF SOME MAPAM PARTY LEADERS. MAPAM- THE LEFTIST ALLY OF THE OPPOSITION LABOR PARTY-APPEARS TO BE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE NASCENT MOVEMENT, BUT LABOR PARTY LEADERS ARE KEEPING A DISCREET DISTANCE FOR THE TIME BEING.

11. AFTER SOME HESITATION, LEADERS OF THE HERUT PARTY-BEGIN'S FACTION OF THE LIKUD BLOC-HAVE ORGANIZED A COUNTER ORGANIZATION, THE "MOVEMENT FOR A SECURE PEACE." THE BRIEF DELAY REFLECTED CONCERN IN HERUT THAT A COUNTER CAMPAIGN WOULD FOCUS GREATER PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT AND INVITE UNFAVORABLE COMPARISONS IF THE "SECURE PEACE" MOVEMENT FAILED TO MATCH THE PUBLIC SUPPORT ITS RIVAL HAD ATTRACTED. HERUT LEADERS APPARENTLY CONCLUDED THAT LEAVING THE FIELD ENTIRELY TO "PEACE NOW" COULD HAVE FAR WORSE CONSEQUENCES.

12. AS A RESULT, THE COUNTER MOVEMENT HAS BEGUN ITS OWN LETTER-WRITING AND SIGNATURE CAMPAIGNS IN SUPPORT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY. IN ADDITION, IT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL HOLD A RALLY THIS SATURDAY NIGHT IN THE SAME SQUARE IN TEL AVIV THAT WAS USED FOR THE FIRST "PEACE NOW" DEMONSTRATION.

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13. THE "PEACE NOW" MOVEMENT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO STEP UP ITS OWN EFFORTS IN RESPONSE AND IS LIKELY TO BECOME MORE SHRILL IN ITS CRITICISM OF BEGIN AND HIS POLICIES. EMBASSY TEL AVIV BELIEVES THIS INCIPIENT POLARIZATION COULD GIVE IMPETUS TO A FULLER DEBATE ON PEACE ISSUES; THE DEBATE HAS LACKED FOCUS AND CLARITY, THANKS LARGELY TO THE

GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESS IN OBSCURING INTERNAL DIFFERENCES
OVER SPECIFIC ISSUES. (CONFIDENTIAL)

14. EGYPT. THE CAIRO PRESS HAS DEPICTED ISRAEL AS BEING
ON THE DEFENSIVE REGARDING THE CLUSTER BOMB ISSUE AND
WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON. EMBASSY CAIRO COMMENTED, HOWEVER,
THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS PRIVATELY ARE BECOMING
INCREASINGLY APPREHENSIVE THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE USING THE
ISSUE OF LEBANON WITHDRAWAL TO DEFLECT US PRESSURE
REGARDING THE BROADER PEACE PROCESS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

15. WEST BANK. TWO PROMINENT WEST BANKERS, BETHLEHEM'S
MAYOR FREIJ AND NABLUS COUNCILMAN ABU GHAZALEH, HAVE GIVEN
CONSULATE GENERAL JERUSALEM WRITTEN STATEMENTS SETTING
FORTH THEIR VIEWS ON A RESOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN
PROBLEM. THEIR PROPOSALS, WHICH CALL AMONG OTHER THINGS
FOR TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE
REMOVAL OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS, REPRESENT THE MAXIMALIST
WEST BANK POSITIONS. THEY DO, HOWEVER, INCLUDE SOME
MODERATE VIEWS, INCLUDING ACCEPTANCE OF A TRANSITIONAL
PERIOD, SPECIFIC ROLES FOR JORDAN AND EGYPT, AND NO
SPECIFIC ROLE FOR THE PLO. THIS GOES BEYOND THE LAST
PUBLIC POSITIONS ADOPTED BY WEST BANK MAYORS AS A WHOLE.
(SECRET) CHRISTOPHER

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